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# The Wrong Way To Protect Secrets

ADRIAN WALKER, a former CIA officer, is the author of "The Wrong Way To Protect Secrets," a book published by Basic Books. Walker was a senior official in the CIA's Office of Security, and he was one of the first to raise the issue of the need for a more effective system of protecting secrets. In his book, Walker argues that the current system of protecting secrets is based on a flawed premise: that the more secrets are classified, the better protected they are. He argues that this is a false dichotomy, and that the real solution is to focus on the quality of the clearance process, rather than the quantity of classified information. Walker's book is a timely contribution to the debate on how to protect secrets in the modern world.

First, the Walker book is directed at the wrong audience. It is aimed at the general public, but it is really a book for the members of the intelligence community. Second, the book is too long and too detailed. It is a 300-page book, and it covers a lot of ground. Third, the book is too technical. It is full of jargon and acronyms, and it is difficult to read. Fourth, the book is too pessimistic. It is full of gloom and doom, and it does not offer any real solutions. Finally, the book is too narrow. It only deals with the issue of protecting secrets, and it does not take into account the broader context of national security.

Dr. Adrian Walker, a former CIA officer, is the author of "The Wrong Way To Protect Secrets," a book published by Basic Books. Walker was a senior official in the CIA's Office of Security, and he was one of the first to raise the issue of the need for a more effective system of protecting secrets. In his book, Walker argues that the current system of protecting secrets is based on a flawed premise: that the more secrets are classified, the better protected they are. He argues that this is a false dichotomy, and that the real solution is to focus on the quality of the clearance process, rather than the quantity of classified information. Walker's book is a timely contribution to the debate on how to protect secrets in the modern world.

pared by a Pentagon panel that included the military's chief polygraph examiner concluded that the technology "works better than chance." Small comfort.

Moreover, as Congress's Office of Technology Assessment notes, polygraph testing is open to a number of "countermeasures" — physical and mental means by which a subject can trick the machine. The more skillful strategy, the less likely a lie defector will catch him. Reliance on the polygraph could easily encourage the pursuit of mistaken leads and create a false sense of security, while overlooking the real spies.

The death penalty and polygraph exemption is a get-tough approach that makes us feel good but accomplishes little. At hand are less dramatic, more effective proposals:

There seems to be a developing consensus that one feature of our security system above all others has contributed to the crisis: too many people have access to classified material. Before we can cut down on the number of security clearances, we have to address a second feature: excessive classification. When everything is classified, everyone must have a clearance, even to do the most ordinary work. If we classify only what is valuable to the Kremlin, we could focus our resources on safeguarding that information.

The Administration, which shares blame for overclassifying information, recognizes that in its efforts to protect everything it has hampered its ability to protect anything. As Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d has said: "A lot of things which shouldn't be classified are, and therefore there is a kind of ho-hum attitude toward the protection of national security information."

If the Reagan Administration cuts back on the amount of information classified and the number of people with clearances, we can then address a third problem: the sizeable backlog in clearance checks. Follow-up investigations are supposed to be made every five years for access to top secret data, but recertifications are running 10 years behind. We should regularly recheck cleared employees and cancel the clearances of those who no longer need them. Finally, we should redouble efforts against the real culprits — the thousands of KGB and Eastern bloc agents operating in this country. They should be the focus of our attention, not the millions of Americans who serve in the military and defense-related industries.

In our eagerness to do something in response to the Walker allegations, let us at least take the time to do something effective.